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The United States' famous Pribilof Islands fur seal herd has grown to 3,155,268 animals it was reported today to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes following the annual census taken by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The herd, which has a capital value well in excess of \$100,000,000, showed an increase of 209,605 animals over the 1944 total. When the Federal government took over direct management of the herd less than 35 years ago, fewer than 120,000 animals remained following decades of slaughtering. It is believed that the herd at one time had consisted of upwards of 4,000,000 seals.

The Fish and Wildlife Service also reported that 76,964 skins had been taken this summer. This is a 61 per cent increase over the 47,652 taken last year.

"The take of skins this year is the second highest since the Government undertook management of the herd," Ward T. Bower, Chief of the Service's Division of Alaska Fisheries, said. "The steady growth of the herd and its present healthy condition now allows us to take a substantial number of skins each year without endangering the herd in any respect.

"As soon as sufficient skilled manpower is available for the difficult job of processing the skins, we will be able to offer larger numbers of these fine furs than have been on the market for many years," Mr. Bower said.

As a result of recently developed methods of processing, sealskins today are superior to those of a generation ago. The dying of sealskins is a highly secret process and for many years only black dyed skins were marketed. Within the past few years, however, two shades of brown have been developed and have added greatly to the popularity of the lustrous fur.

A new method of buffing the skins has made them softer and more pliable and thus suitable for use in highstyle coats rather than the box-like garments which were the rule not many years ago.

Alaska sealskins are processed by a St. Louis, Mo., firm under contract with the Fish and Wildlife Service and are sold at public auction each fall and spring. Under an agreement with Canada, that country receives either 20 per cent of the proceeds of such sales or 20 per cent of the skins.

The Pribilof Islands—small, treeless, and of volcanic origin—lie in the Bering Sea, just north of the Aleutians. These islands, the only land ever touched by the Alaska seals, are the summer breeding place of more than 80 per cent of the fur seals of the world. Profits from management of the seal herd have already paid back to the United States substantially more than the original cost of the whole of Alaska.